for not issuing the Kisan Credit Cards in accordance with the target and what action is being taken to achieve the target?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Policy on duty on import of antiques

1964. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that no Government policy or guidelines exist today with regard to duty and tax free import of antiques, relics and items of national treasure, which belonged to India in first place and were exported thereafter,

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal to be put in place for such a policy;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) Under the present government policy, antiques and works of art imported for exhibition in a public museum or in a national institute are fully exempt from customs duties. As regards relics and items of national treasure, there is no specific exemption at present. However, if such items qualify to be treated as antiques, they will also be eligible for exemption subject to condition specified above.

(d) Does not arise in view of (a) to (c) above.

Pending cases in courts for recovery of dues

1965. SHRI CHO S. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is **a** fact that a large number of cases are pending in various courts and tribunals for recovery of Income Tax Central Excise and Customs duty;

(b) if so, how many such cases are pending in various courts across the country;

(c) what is the total expected revenue which has to be recovered through these cases;

(d) what steps are being taken to speed up the recovery; and

(e) whether Government are considering fast track courts to speedily clear these pending cases and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Considerable number of cases are pending in various Courts and Tribunals for recovery of Income Tax, Central Excise and Customs duty.

(b) The total number of cases pending in various courts and Tribunals are as under:

SI. No.	No. of cases	Date
Direct Taxes	1,06,201	As on 30.6.2004 As
Indirect Taxes	32,948	on 30.9.2004

(c) The total revenue involved in these cases is as under:

Rs. in crores

SI. No.	Amount Involved	Date
Direct Taxes	30507	As on 30.6.2004 As
Indirect Taxes	17560	on 30.9.2004

(d) The steps taken to speed up recovery include monitoring the pending cases before the Tribunals, High Courts and Supreme Court, issue of instructions fixing higher monetary limits for filing appeals in an effort to minimize litigation, legislative measures to correct lacunae pointed out by the courts, periodical meetings with officers concerned to resolve high demand appeals on priorit basis, constitution of Task Forces for recovery of arrears, etc.

(e) The Government has introduced the National Tax Tribunal Bill, 2004

in the current session of the Parliament for setting up the National Tax Tribunal. This will expedite resolution of tax related cases and also facilitate early recovery of tax arrears.

Consolidated merger of PSU banks

1966. SHRI CHO S. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is **a** fact that Government propose to come up with the scheme of consolidation of banks by merging them with each other;

(b) whether the Cabinet nod has been taken for this purpose;

(c) by when it is likely to be implemented;

(d) what are the banks which are being taken up for consolidated mergers;

(e) what will be the impact on the performance of these banks after the mergers; and

(f) what is the level of performance of the PSU banks *vis-a-vis* the private sector banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (d) The initiative for consolidation has to come from the management of the banks themselves with the Govt, playing a supportive role as common shareholder. No directive on consolidation has been issued by the Govt. or RBI.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(e) Consolidation would allow economies of scale in terms of footprint, manpower and other resources. Having Indian Banks of a larger size would enable them to face competition arising from internationalization of the economy. Larger size also entails better management of risk. Small and weak banks pose systemic risks with their low capital adequacy ratio and high NPA's. Consolidation is a timely response to augment efficiency which would lead to income generation and add to GDP of the country.